

W. Water Street 433 Businesses

Original

- 1975 Joanne's Salon of Beauty
Clewrens Beauty Shop
Grocery Store
- 2007 Dr. Chisek
- 2009 Dr. Mishad Coppersmith Chiropractic

Original

In the narrow, two-story building next to Turner Hall (later the Princeton Theater), Mrs. Corencke had her candy shop. The living quarters were on the second floor with a cheerful sunny kitchen back of the store. They had a lovely view of the Fox River and the grassy marsh on the opposite side.

Through a door with a latch placed very low, the tinkling bell announced three or more generations of children who had entered Mrs. Corencke's "Story Book Candy Land."

To the left was the glass case of penny candies. To the right a higher showcase and counter where the 5-cent and 10-cent candies were displayed and where grown-ups could buy rich Jersey cottage cheese and butter, coffee, tea and sugar. Mrs. Corencke (or Kranky as the children pronounced it) was a tiny round little woman. Her curly hair had been bright red, but gradually over the years had turned snow white.

In the forenoon, she wore a cover-all apron over her gray or blue calico dress; in the afternoon she wore a light colored blouse, a very full skirt and a crisply starched white apron. Her doll-like feet were encased in proper black Martha Washington slippers.

The floor of the shop was scrubbed every morning. On wet days it was covered with newspapers. The low glass showcases and the glass in the door were spotlessly clean. Children soon learned to keep their fingers off the glass.

An older brother or sister introduced you in the proper procedure to follow when you came to spend your penny at the age of 2 ½ or 3. You stood on tiptoe and placed your penny or pennies on the glass showcase. Then you pointed and asked the price of the newest batch of seasonal candy.

All prices were quoted as "so many for a penny." Very early you learned not to dawdle over your selection.

If you had trouble deciding, your pennies were snatched from the counter and you found yourself with a square of waxed paper with the least attractive of the assortment of candies on it. No paper bags were used. Squares of paper from the boxes in which the candy had been packed were used.

I never heard a child protest when he received this treatment. When he came again he made up his mind in a reasonable time.

Somehow this round little lady with her prim and decisive manner earned and received the respect of the children. Some of the bolder ones called her "Ole Lady Kranky," but we never dared. I never saw her smile, neither did I ever hear her reprimand a child. Her manner spoke for her (or were we just a little bit afraid of her?).

Very early every morning she could be seen driving her Jersey cow, with the crumpled horn, to the fenced-in area on Farmer Street, which extended down to the Fox River.

Her pale daughter, Laura, tended the store while her mother took care of her chores. In the years after Laura passed away, the little shop was closed for short periods during the day, but the children knew "Mrs. Kranky" would soon open up again.

Most stores in Princeton closed during the noon hour. Bankers, storekeepers and clerks walked home to their big meal of the day and were back at work at 1 o'clock.

After our noon dinner, Papa doled out our pennies and with our schoolmates, we skipped in the candy store, chanting "Hippity hop to the barbershop to get a stick of candy." We tried to fit the chant to "Mrs. Kranky's candy shop."

We ran out of time and as we opened the door, the tinkling bell announced our coming. We forgot about the chant and concentrated on the best thing to get for our afternoon recess snack. The school in the triangle was less than a block from "Mrs. Kranky's" store and if the bell rang we could run and still get to school on time.

"Mrs. Kranky's" was strictly a little kid's store. At a certain age, we decided we had outgrown the penny candy store and spent our pennies and nickels for penny china dolls or nickel dolls with hair at Frank Mueller's drugstore. The parrot on his perch intrigued us with his "Polly wants a cracker."

Our trips to Mrs. Corencke's store were purely as chaperons for the little kids to teach them the special ritual of buying candy. The furry white windup Santa had nodded his head every year to announce the coming of Christmas. He began to look very tired and moth-eaten, but to each new crop of Mrs. Corencke's customers he proclaimed the season of red and white candy canes.

After we were no longer "little kids," we bought Boston Beans at Nickodem Brothers' general store. You waited until Polly was behind the counter. She was generous and put our purchases into a green and red striped paper bag. Shew's grocery store (where the library now is) received a barrel of small blood oranges once a year. They sold for 2 cents each and the supply never lasted more than a day or two. "Mrs. Kranky's" business dropped off sharply on those days.

Do children today know about licorice nigger babies, miniature bottles made of paraffin and filled with colored syrup (after sipping the sweet syrup, you chewed the paraffin bottle), licorice whips and those long, long sticks of O.K. gum and marshmallow rabbits with pink ears? I have my mother's autograph book where each autograph verse was set apart by gayly colored pressed paper flowers. These had come from paraffin hearts which had been a specialty of Mrs. Corencke's candy store.

The dates in the album go back to the late 1880s. In the 1930s, my own children trekked to "Mrs. Kranky's" just as their grandmother and I had done.

Mrs. Corencke's candy shop taught us to make up our minds or take the consequences for dawdling. We learned not to place sticky fingers on glass showcases.

Our voices were lowered when we entered that clean, little room. Even today I can close my eyes and smell the clean, sweet candy smell of that candy store.



The author is a former Chicago school teacher and has resided at 406 S. Park Ave. for about seven years. Last Christmas she wrote a First Person story about her grandmother's trip across the ice in a sleigh to attend yule services.

By MABEL D. SCHROEDER

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